



California  
Department of  
Health Services

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October 8, 2004

TO: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers in California

SUBJECT: **Update on California VFC Flu Vaccine Supply and Immunization Policy**

On October 5, 2004, the California Department of Health Services (DHS) was notified that none of the influenza vaccine (Fluvirin®) produced by Chiron Corporation would be available for distribution in the United States for the 2004–05 influenza season. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in the United Kingdom, where Chiron's Fluvirin vaccine is produced, has temporarily suspended Chiron Corporation's license to manufacture Fluvirin vaccine in its Liverpool facility, preventing any release of this vaccine for this influenza season. This action will reduce by approximately one-half the expected supply of trivalent inactivated vaccine (flu shots) available in the United States for the 2004–05 influenza season.

**Supply of Influenza Vaccine to VFC**

The federal VFC program purchased influenza vaccine (Fluzone®) from Aventis Pasteur, Inc., and not from Chiron Corporation. For the 2004-05 influenza season, the California VFC program has ordered 815,000 doses of influenza vaccine (Fluzone®). The California VFC program has received more than one-quarter of the order, over 215,000 doses, to date. More than half of this supply is the preservative-free vaccine formulation of 0.25 ml, packaged in single-dose, pre-filled syringes for children from 6 to 35 months of age.

Because of the overall shortage of vaccine for the 2004-05 influenza season, it is possible that CDC may redirect remaining VFC vaccine for other public health uses. We will alert you of any such changes to the VFC vaccine supply. With the scarcity of influenza vaccine, it is important that you carefully review and abide by the following recommendations.

**Recommendations for Immunization with Influenza Vaccine**

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in coordination with its Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP), has issued interim recommendations for influenza vaccination during the 2004–05 season. These interim recommendations were formally recommended by ACIP on October 5, 2004, (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/whoshouldget.htm>) and take precedence over earlier recommendations.

Based on the interim recommendations, at this time VFC influenza vaccine should only be administered to VFC-eligible children who belong to one or more of the following priority groups because of the increased risk of severe influenza for themselves or their infant contacts:

- all children aged 6 to 23 months
- children aged 6 months to 18 years who
  - have underlying chronic medical conditions
  - are on chronic aspirin therapy
  - are out-of-home caregivers and household contacts (e.g., siblings) of children aged <6 months

These priority groups are considered to be of equal importance.

The parents or guardians of children who are not included in one of the priority groups for immunization described above should be informed about the urgent vaccine supply situation and asked to forgo vaccination of any such children at lower risk. Healthy children aged 2 to 18 years are encouraged not to receive vaccine this year.

Children aged <9 years require 2 doses of influenza vaccine if they have not previously been vaccinated. All children in the priority groups should be vaccinated with a first or second dose, depending on their vaccination status. However, doses should not be held in reserve to ensure that 2 doses will be available. Instead, available vaccine should be used to vaccinate persons in priority groups on a first-come, first-serve basis.

There are a few children who should not receive influenza vaccine before talking with their doctor:

- persons with a severe allergy (i.e., anaphylactic allergic reaction) to hens' eggs
- persons who previously had onset of Guillain-Barré syndrome during the 6 weeks after receiving influenza vaccine

To assist with prioritizing individuals for influenza vaccine, we have enclosed:

- a sample screening checklist for your patients
- a poster to explain the vaccine shortage and prioritization to your patients' families

If you should possess more VFC influenza vaccine than you can use, please contact your VFC field representative to discuss reallocation of vaccine to others in need.

**Provision of VFC-Purchased Influenza Vaccine to Those Who are Not Eligible for VFC**

The provision of VFC-purchased influenza vaccine to those who are not eligible for VFC, including adults, remains illegal.

Additional categories of individuals (e.g., adults) who are prioritized to receive non-VFC influenza vaccine are listed at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/whoshouldget.htm>.

### **Additional Measures to Protect Against Influenza**

Because of decreased supplies of vaccine, there may be increased transmission of influenza in your community this winter. We recommend the following measures to limit the transmission of influenza to your family, staff, and patients.

Persons ineligible for receipt of VFC vaccine that should be immunized with non-VFC vaccine include:

- health care workers involved in direct patient care
- adults, including parents, caring for children aged <6 months

Adults in these groups may be immunized either by injection or intranasally administered, live, attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV). LAIV should not be used for adults who:

- are 50 years or older
- have high-risk chronic medical conditions
- care for severely immunocompromised patients

Simple hygiene messages should also be promoted to your office staff and the families of your patients to limit the spread of disease. These messages include:

- Wash your hands  
Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes  
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth  
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs, and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick  
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick  
When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Stay up to date with all other immunizations  
Children need to be protected this winter against pertussis, pneumococcal disease and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

Enclosed is a copy of a cling-on sign ("Germ free zone") that can be displayed in your office to help prevent the spread of influenza and other infectious diseases.

October 8, 2004

We intend to provide you with updates on influenza immunization as new information becomes available. Please contact your VFC field representative with your questions and concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Howard Backer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Howard Backer, M.D., M.P.H., Chief  
Immunization Branch

Enclosures: Screening Sheet  
Priority Groups Poster/Flyer  
Hygiene Poster

cc: DHS Immunization Branch Field Representatives  
Local Health Officers  
Local Health Department Immunization Coordinators  
Local Health Department CHDP Program Directors  
Marcia Ehinger, M.D., Medi-Cal Benefits Branch, CDHS  
Kathy Chance, M.D., Children Medical Services Branch, CDHS  
Lorraine Brown, Deputy Director, Benefits and Quality Monitoring, MRMIB  
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